motivation through improved work-environment. Provision of new value added services for the business/ professional segment of customers is also in focus for optimising the upgraded retailing capacity of modernised postal counters. Computer based technologies are also being introduced in other areas of activity like financial services, PLI, Inventory control and Speed Post Service.

The department's policy of modernisation through induction of new technology is being achieved on the basis of an extensive training programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its employees.

The department is also seeking to segment its areas of activities catering for business and ..commercial sector and those for meeting universal service obligation with a view to improving quality of service and generation of revenue.

Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Maharashtra

2565. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a communication requesting Government for establishment of a Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Thane district of Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) by when the action is expected to be initiated?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is registered demand of 145 new telephone connections at Atgaon.

(c) A new electronic telephone exchange is planned to be opened during 1997-98.

Opening of New Post Offices in Maharashtra

2566. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for opening new Post Offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996;

(b) the reasons for the pendency; and

(c) by when the new Post Offices are expected to be opened in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) The number of applications for opening new post offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996 is 188.

(b) The reason for pendency is that the justification of these post offices is being examined at various levels.

(c) The Post Offices justified will be considered for opening subject to Plan targets and availability of resources.

Surrender of amount by Bihar Telecom Circle

2567. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bihar Telecom Circle surrendered huge amounts meant for improvement of the telcom system in the State because of its non-utilisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the amount surrendered; and

(c) the reasons for non-utilisation of the fund?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Bihar Telecom Circle has surrendered Rs. 37.07 crores only out of the fund allocated for 1995-96.

(c) The amount of Rs. 37.07 crores could not be used owing to non-receipt of

certain equipments before the end of the financial year of 1995-96.

Outstanding Dues against Ex-MPs

2568. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MTNL continues to issue bills for rental in respect of telephones which have been disconnected on the grounds of non-payment of dues; and if so, the reasons therefor and the details of rules under which such bills are issued to the subscribers; and

(b) the details of the outstanding dues of more than Rs. 50,000/- against the Ex-Members of Parliament as on 28th February, 1997 and the steps taken to recover these dues?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir. The bills for rental are sent even after disconnection, since the rental for the intervening period *i.e.* from the date of disconnection to the date of restoration is payable by the subscriber as per Rule 443 of the Indian Telegraph Rules. In case the telephone is permanently closed the rental recovered beyond the date of disconnection is refunded.

(b) The details are given in statement *(see* below). Notices are issued and regular follow up action for recovery is being followed as per the prescribed procedure.

Statement

Details of outstanding dues of more than Rs. 50,000/- against Ex-Members of Parliament as on 28.2.97

SI.	Particular	No. of MPs.	Amount Rs.
1.	VII & VIII Lok Sabha	42	6132363
2.	IX Lok Sabha	30	3169971
3.	X Lok Sabha	190	52680421
4.	Rajya Sabha	58	12514317
	Total	320	74497072

Delay in Telephone Connections in Rourkela Due to Offical Apathy

2569. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the waiting list of General Category registrants for telephones in Rourkela, Orissa;

(b) whether it is a fact that persons since August, 1996 have not got any telephone connections;

(c) if so, the reasons for the delay;

(d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to clear the waiting list; and

(e) the action taken/proposed to be taken against the corrupt/erring officials/ staff who demand bribes for releasing telephone connections?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) The details of the waiting list of general category